ALPHONSO

AND

ELINOR,

OR THE

MYSTERIOUS

DISCOVERY.

ENTERED AT THE STAMP OFFICE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

ALPHONSO

AND

ELINOR.

THE evening Alphonso quitted the Count de Montmorenci's, (with whom he had been condoling the mysterious loss of his daughter Elinor) a gentleman accosted him, and asked if he was not the Baron de Semonville? Alphonso replied in the affirmative. This gentleman began conversing about his father, and many incidents, which made Alphonso believe he had been pretty well acquainted with his family: the evening being remarkable fine, Alphonso walked some way, attending to the gentleman's conversation.

Coming to the corner of a bye part, he wished Alphonso a good night, and instantly disappeared. At that moment Alphonso was seized and bound hand and foot, and his mouth covered, so as to prevent him from making any noise. He soon found himself in a carriage, which drove away with amazing rapidity.

He seemed to travel many hours, and when they unclosed his eyes and mouth to take some refreshment, he perceived it was day, and that they were on a large common remote from any habitation. After partaking of some refreshments, of which he stood much in need, they again proceeded to bind his face; all resistance was unnecessary, for four men of most stern and morose countenances, were sitting in the carriage with him. Submitting to their cruel power, they continued on their journey, thro' the night, when he found the carriage suddenly stop, and he was lifted from it, and conveyed he knew not where.

When he was first unbound, he found himself in a spacious hall, surrounded by monks in black habits; in every part were crucifixes, and pictures taken from religious subjects. He scarce believed his eyes, for what had he to do with any thing monastic? He certainly thought he had been seized by mistake, and expressed himself to the surrounding fathers accordingly, but the scornful and exulting monks turned on their heels, and gave him no answer.

A most tormenting day ensued, and at night he was conducted down a steep descent, and secured in a miserable cell. Here he had sufficient room for reflection, for he could not form an idea of the cause of his seizure, nor

what business a body of monks had to detain him. All hopes of searching after Adeline, were now at an end; for how was it possible for him to escape the snares of an abominable fraternity, whom, to his recollection, he never had offended?

What mysterious horrors hung over him, and enveloped all that was dear, and all that he esteemed! certainly he had an extreme friendship for Elinor de Montmorenci, and Adeline engrossed every affection—both were mysteriously torn from the arms of their friends—himself another victim—thought, in enumerating his afflictions, seemed to lose itself; and a temporary slumber, for a few moments, robbed him of his miserable sensations.

He was roused from this momentary interval from despair, by the most affecting groans, which the stillness of the night aided to assail his ears more forcibly. He listened, and thought he could not be deceived. Another groan, from a different quarter, broke the awful silence of the night; the sound was piteous and distressing, and seemed to issue faintly, as from one nearly expiring. "Can it be real?" said he, "Or is it the error of imagination? Hark! Sure that horrid sound could not be fancy." A violent shriek issued from a part more near; it seemed to break from the bosom of one in excruciating pain.

"Can this be abode of any thing human?" he exclaimed, "or is it dæmons, bearing a human form? to what concentration of horrors has fate assigned me!" He started—listened, and still, at interval, the most melancholy

and distressing groans, mingled with sighs which seemed to proceed from many unfortunate objects, were uttered, which drew his thoughts from his own misfortunes, to attend to the misery of others; and his griefs were encreased, by finding the cell so small, that he had but just room to turn about.

In the morning, provisions were brought him for the day, by two of the fathers, the one, he imagined, was a check upon the other. He anxiously demanded the reason why he was secured in that horrid place; but the cruel monks gave no reply to his interrogations, and left him overwhelmed with despair, carefully securing the cell as they departed.

In this manner passed four miserable days, and the nights as the former one. On the fifth day, two monks came with torches in their hands, and bade him follow. He gladly obeyed the summons, being still willing to think he was seized by mistake. They conducted him through the most terrifying and intricate windings; at length, ascending a flight of irregular steps, he found himself, in a few minutes, in a spacious hall, where, in solemn state, sat a person, he was informed, was the Director, surrounded by a numerous band of black friars.

With a firm and dauntless mind, he stepped forward into the presence of this demi-god, who put many strange interrogations to him; among which, the following:

"What is your name?"

"Alphonso de Semonville!"

"Baron de Semonville, Why omit naming who you are?" "That is my title," replied

Alphonso. "Right!" said the Director, exultingly, "You would endeavour to persuade us we were mistaken."

"I am still inclined to believe you are mistaken."

"What are your crimes?"

"None!"

"Here's a wretch!" replied the Director, with scorn; "has been all his life in the world, amidst its dissipation, its luxury, pride, intemperance, and all worldly passions; yet says he has no crimes!—immediately confess."

"I never was called upon to make a public confession," said Alphonso, "neither shall I now."

"You will be obliged."

"By what authority?"

"Mine!---Hear me, and tremble, mine."

Alphonso surveyed him with silent contempt, as a wretch puffed up with pride and arrogance, but without deigning to reply.

"Put him to the torture!---we will obtain a confession!" said the stern director. "No crimes, a wretch!--- no crimes!"

"Of what am I accused?" demanded Alphonso.

"I am not here to answer questions----it is not allowed you to ask any,"----was the reply.

"That privilege," said Alphonso, "I imagined, was only before the Tribunal of the Inquisition, or the Bastile. I do not think I am before either, nor can believe any other can put me to the question; I therefore demand who is my accuser, and of what I stand accused?"

"You are insolent, and know not what power you stand against," replied the Inquirer, "learn to respect my power, and revere my clemency----mercy shall, for this time, prevail, lead him back to his cell----by to-morrow, he may recollect his crime; and I then expect a clear and unequivocal confession, or he may depend on its being extorted from him by torture."

Alphonso, with an air of dignity, turned from the arbitrary and insulting Director; and placidly resigned himself into the hands of the monks, who conducted him to the miserable abode allotted him.

When alone, he strove to recall every circumstance of his past life, to search for a cause for his mysterious confinement; but he knew not of any offence wherein he could be amenable to the laws of his country, much less to the monks. A night of extreme anxiety succeeded, and before morning, he resigned himself up to that Being, who alone knows the hearts of men; and trusting to his own innocence and integrity, awaited the arrival of the monks, to re-conduct him into the presence of his stern judge.

When brought before him a second time, the same interrogations were put, and Alphonso, as resolutely answered them, and demanded who was his accuser, as he still insisted he knew himself guilty of no crime that the laws could take cognizance of.

"Put him to the torture!" replied the Director, "his crimes will then be known."

"I submit," replied Alphonso, "Vain is every opposition, when my enemies appear so

numerous. Vain is the assertion of an innocent man; when your ears and heart seem hardened to the voice of truth and reason; but there is a merciful, and just God above, to whom I appeal! be cautious how you judge, lest that God should be as unmerciful to you, as you are now to me."

Alphonso then delivered himself into the hands of the monks, to be led to receive his punishment; but, when about half-way along the dreary vaults, a monk hastily followed, and ordered them to return.

Again brought into the Director's presence, he said, "There is but one way of saving yourself; 'tis this, immediately enter into holy orders, be one of our brethren, and the doom of torture is cancelled; it is only suspended till you give your answer."

"I never had a thought, or wish to enter a monastic life, therefore am not prepared with an answer, nor is it possible, for me so instantaneously to determine; I must have time to consider," replied Alphonso.

"In two days I shall expect your reply---till then, the doom of torture is suspended----you know the terms----retire."

Alphonso was again led from his presence, but was rather surprised to find the place of his confinement changed; for, after being led down the first flight of steps, they turned to the left, and passed through several intricate cells, and windings, till they came to a large gloomy arched passage; at the extremity, was a door that opened into the centre of a large vault, filled with coffins, and other relics of death. An iron grating was raised, and they

descended down more mouldering steps, that led to another vault. This, he was told, was the place allotted him, till he chose to consent. They then retreated, securing the iron grate, and left him to muse on his hapless destiny.

He had means to view the extent of his prison, as light was every where shut out, but what was admitted through the iron grate, which received its light from the small windows, that cast a feeble ray into the burying place. Anxious to catch a glance, he ascended to the top of the steps, and with eager gaze looked through that cell of horrors! The damp, and noxious vapours of that dismal place, nearly overcame him, and his heart experienced a terror he had ever been a stranger to.

In about two hours, two other stern monks approached through the dreadful gloom, bringing him a scanty allowance of provisions, and a lamp, which, they told him, was to last till he appeared again before the Director, and left him, securing the grate as before.

Alphonso felt a gleam of joy at the sight of the lamp. He took it, as soon as they were out of hearing, and examined every part of his wretched habitation, which was a very large vaulted place; and his lamp cast but a feeble ray on the surrounding darkness; the recesses were numerous and deep, and every part strongly secured, so that all hopes of escaping were entirely out of the question; for there was no other entrance to this abode of horrors, but by the way of the grate.

As he was examining this cavern of despair, in one of the recesses he discovered a

small roll of paper, which he eagerly seized, as every trifle relieved the agony of his soul. Opening it, to his great astonishment, he read the following lines, which were written with a pencil:

"*Whoever enters this abode of misery,* "*darkness, and despair, never leave it, but to* "*be led to torture or death; unless the Al-* "*mighty permits the king of terrors to free* "*their mortal part from the hands of their* "*cruel and merciless persecutors. Edward de* "*Valmont has a fatal proof of it, by refusing* "*to enter their order, was condemned to this* "*place, by still refusing, was called forth to* "*suffer inconceiveable torture! remanded back* "*to bear a few days of lingering anguish, till* "*it pleased them to give the final blow. Take* "*warning by Edward de Valmont! Dam-* "*piere is merciless and cruel; when he seems* "*most kind, he is most to be feared, and then* "*his vengeance is most terrible!*"

"Dampiere!-----Dampiere!" exclaimed Alphonso, as he concluded the wretched information, the paper contained. "Was that stern judge Dampiere, whom the unfortunate Elinor spoke of? Oh! if that arrogant wretch is the same, tremble De Castelle, for no mercy, no pity, no humanity inhabits his savage breast!" He put the paper into his pocket, and continued wandering about his dismal prison. As he returned under the grate, he thought he heard the footsteps of some one, wandering in the vault above, and saw the glimpse of something move over his head, when turning his eyes, he perceived a paper

fall through the grate, and descend to the ground. Alphonso set down his lamp, and darted up the steps, to see who it was, and to his surprize, saw a monk gliding precipitately through the dreary arches. He watched as long as his eyes could gaze, and till his footsteps died away in silence; then turning to the ground, on which lay the paper, he hastily seized it, and eagerly read the contents, it was addressed to him:

"*One of the Fathers, whose heart is* "*not so callous to every feeling of humanity,* "*as his fellows, shocked to see you suffer with-* "*out knowing for what, takes this method of* "*informing you, you are here by order of the* "*Count St. Julian!----Your own heart is the* "*best judge, if you are guilty of any crime* "*towards him. The Director is his kinsman,* "*from whom you may expect no mercy; if* "*you have no dislike to a monastic life, accept* "*his offer; your refusal will be torture and* "*death! You are now in that prison, where* "*no one that ever once entered, escaped! God* "*bless you! and receive your soul, if you* "*should suffer the punishments which will be* "*inflicted on you; if your heart will permit* "*you, comply----if not, Father M———* "*will remember you in his orisons.*"

"Then death be my choice!" exclaimed Alphonso, as he concluded the monk's epistle, "rather than be compelled to enter a fraternity I never liked; to renounce all I hold dear on earth! let me suffer extreme tortures, and the malice of Dampiere's hate. O God! to

thee I call;---forsake me not in this distress, but endow my soul with fortitude in the trying moment, that sooner or later must come; and O save me! save me! merciful Redeemer, from despair!"

As Alphonso uttered these words, he dashed himself with violence against the wall, at the farther end of his prison, in one of the recesses where he had withdrawn himself to peruse the scroll. As he fell against the wall, in an agony not to be described, it on a sudden gave way, and a part was open, nearly large enough for him to press his body through.

He gazed on it with astonishment, exclaiming, "Heaven, for this mercy, be praised! perhaps I may yet escape!----O grant the means!" He soon removed some of the rubbish, and stepping through the cavity, leaving his lamp, lest it might be missed if any one should pass over the iron grate; and entered a large vault, where one single lamp glimmered in the socket, and cast a feeble ray through the gloom.

Alphonso trembled as he advanced, "Who knows," said he, "some other wretch, as miserable as myself, suffers also." The thought robbed him of his own sorrows:---he at that moment seemed to feel none, but advanced towards the lamp which stood at the front of a cell; on examining, he found the form of a female, to all appearance, newly dead. Shocked at the piteous spectacle, he started, and exclaimed, "Is it possible, that there can be such villainy in the world? how many of our fellow creatures lay pining with anguish, and dying with want and despair?—

while in our own houses, we little imagine, human nature can be so vile to create such sufferings!---Miserable unfortunate!----Here thou art, bereft of life, while, in all probability, the hearts of thy friends are breaking to know what is become of thee, if I may judge from the manner I was torn from mine." He paused,----again surveyed the palid, woe-worn features of the deceased, and uttered a prayer for her soul's repose—then taking the lamp that stood before her, he proceeded on his way, in hopes to find some means of escape.

Advancing farther on, and turning an angle, a piteous groan assailed his ears, and he stopped to listen whence it proceeded. It was repeated. "Hark! (said he,) another being wretched as myself, pines in these vaults unpitied, and unknown. I will proceed, though I have not the power of escaping, nor of giving relief to the unfortunate, yet the voice of one who pities our misfortunes, gives a trifling consolation." He stepped forward, and turning another angle, the feeble light of another lamp claimed his attention, at the same time, a groan of agony echoed through the vault. Alphonso presented himself before the cell, his heart beating with convulsive emotion; and looking, observed another female, in a cell just sufficient to hold her in a sitting attitude. She clasped her hands together, as he approached, and the dreadful sound of chains rattled through the prison. "Is it possible that thou art Alphonso?" exclaimed a voice that seemed familiar to his ears—he raised his hand to his forehead, to look more minutely,

as she knew his name. But what was his astonishment, to behold in the sufferer, Elinor de Montmorenci, pale, wan, and exhausted; her emaciated frame could scarce support the weight of chains her cruel oppressors had doomed her to wear. The sight of Alphonso was too much for her to sustain; she was near fainting, while he, in unutterable anguish, raised his clasped hands to heaven, exclaiming, "Gracious God! how mysterious are thy ways! Do I really find Elinor de Montmorenci, suffering in this mansion of misery?" He immediately exerted his utmost abilities to restore her, but she was too languid and feeble to say any thing particular.

"I am a prisoner, (said he,) like yourself, doomed in two days to suffer the torture; by accident I came into this vault, in hopes to seek the means of escape, if I succeed, you shall be the partner of my flight. I will not despair, Elinor, I feel revived since I have seen you."

"Ah! Alphonso," she replied, casting her languid eyes on him. "What other sensation can be felt in these abodes of horror, where death and despair reign supreme?"

"Oh! (replied Alphonso,) let hope once more be cherished; if I succeed, it is well, if not, still will I return to you, if only to bid an eternal adieu."

He then left her, and turning the angles, passed by the dead victim that he first saw---- then looked into his own cell, where his lamp still burnt unmolested. He pursued his course through gloomy aisles and miserable caverns, in which the cells of the wretched victims of

monastic oppression, presented themselves, though he could not perceive they were occupied. In his way he stumbled over something, which stooping for, proved to be a large iron bolt—"It may be serviceable, (said he,) I will not reject any thing." He then came to a flight of steps, which ascending, he found himself in another vault, at the extremity he came to a small door, in many places decayed, looking through, he perceived it led into a passage, at the end of which light appeared. With small difficulty, he wrenched the staples that held the bolt, as they were locked down, and the door opened freely into the passage.

Elated at his success, he left the lamp, and proceeded to the extremity; the aperture that let in the light, proved to be a breach in the wall, that looked into an open field; it was much decayed, and the cement was mouldering away.

He easily removed some of the stones and rubbish. Hope gave him strength and courage beyond his natural abilities. In about two hours, he had removed sufficient to let his body pass.

The shades of night fell fast before he left his work, and the stars began to deck the serene firmament. Falling on his knees, he implored the assistance of Heaven, to favor his escape; and prayed fervently that no accident might oppose it. He felt relieved, his mind resumed its fortitude; hope fluttered in his breast, and he looked with rapture on the chasm in the wall, that seemed to promise, to lead him to liberty and life.

His thoughts now reverted to Elinor, whom he wished to make the partner of his flight; the greatest difficulty seemed to him, the removal of her chains. Snatching up his bolt, with firmness, he darted through the vaults, till he reached the cell of Elinor.

"You are returned, (sighed she,) Oh! my fears! There is no possibility of escaping these caverns of wretchedness; we must linger in despair, till the icy hand of death frees us from the oppression of our tyrants." "Banish despair, (replied Alphonso,) I am blest with the means of flight! I only returned for you!" Without waiting a reply, he proceeded to unfix the fetters that bound her hands; but the task was too difficult without proper instruments, his heart sickened at the thought of her, and his spirits began to give way. At length, he examined the ring in the wall, that secured the chain. His bolt was here of service; with a force almost supernatural, he wrenched it from its fastening, and Elinor was released. But a new difficulty presented itself; for Elinor had continued so long in one posture, so long had been deprived of proper nourishment, and air, that she had not power to step one foot before the other. Alphonso lifted her into the centre of the cavern; and being unable to remove the fetters that encircled her wrists and waist, he wound them round her body, and bound her robe between them, to stifle their sound. He then carried her, more dead than alive, through the vaults. The thought of liberty, and the freshness of the air, as they

advanced towards the chasm, was too powerful for her feeble frame to contend with, and she fainted in his arms,

Alphonso's feelings were now arrived to a pitch of phrenzy. The prospect of liberty so near—the impediment so distressing; to increase his terror, he fancied he heard a door clap too with violence, and the dread of being pursued, added to his emotions. Fortunately, he was now near the aperture, and he placed Elinor in an attitude, so that he could draw her through. He then stepped through himself, and releasing her from her situation, removed her by the light of the moon which was very bright, to a hedge near by, where exerting every effort for her recovery, he at last succeeded.

After sitting a short time to rest themselves, Alphonso again lifted the trembling and exhausted Elinor, to enable her to step a few paces; but his fears, lest they should be perceived, and Elinor's chains continuing to chink, induced him to take her once more in his arms; fear gave him new strength, and he conveyed her a good way towards a town that appeared at a distance, and then leaving leaving Elinor under a tree by the road side, he hastily proceeded to the town, where, at the first inn he procured a post carriage, and to his surprize, found this town to be Loudun, many miles distant from his own dwelling at St. Amans.

The carriage being ready which was to convey them to Minabeau, and being in extreme haste, so that he could not stop to take refreshment, but he took with him some wine and

cake, that Elinor might partake of. He soon came to the place where he had left her, happy to find her still safe, as also much revived by the air; he lifted her into the carriage, and it instantly drove away.

"How much I am obliged to you, (said Elinor) but for you Alphonso, my miseries would have ended but with life: I am sure I have reason to thank you, and pray for you as long as I live. Blessed be providence for our escape, despair had nearly overcome me, and hope had scarce power to re-animate my breast, so long and painful had been my sufferings."

"Let us hope (said Alphonso) we may be able to reach a place of safety before our flight is discovered, for I really dread the pursuit of our tyrants; but I will trust in the Almighty, for a continuation of that protection, we have so happily experienced."

Elinor now took a little wine, and eat sparingly of some cake: her spirits grew more cheerful, but want of proper nourishment, had been so long familiar to Elinor, that she feared to partake the offered refreshment. They proceeded fast on their journey, and as they drew near the place of their destination, new difficulties brought new fears. Elinor was still in chains, nor had Alphonso the means of releasing her, every effort he had tried, but in vain. To appear thus before any one, would make them imagine she was a criminal escaped and she might be seized accordingly, and all their flattering dreams of safety vanished into air. Or should any one suppose she had quitted a convent, the dread of offending the clergy had such power on the minds of the people,

that it was impossible to hope any one would be so daring to conceal her, but that instant notice would be given to every convent round.

Undetermined how to act, the carriage, before they were aware of it, stopped at the door of the inn, and Elinor overcame with terror for her own and Alphonso's safety, was lifted almost lifeless from the carriage, and conveyed into a room, which was opened for her reception.

The hour of midnight had struck, and the house was shutting up, but hearing the sound of chains, several of the people of the inn, ran into the room to see what was the matter, the master of the house among them.

Alphonso was hurt at their observations, but conscious innocence gave him courage, and he thought it best to declare the truth, lest they might conjecture wrongfully. "You see before you, (said Alphonso) a wretched victim of monastic cruelty! By miracle I have released her, and hope to restore her to the arms of her father, from whom she has been torn, now three months, and confined in a dungeon of horrors, deprived of light, and dying for want. It is Elinor de Montmorenci, whose mysterious loss, no doubt, you are acquainted with, as the numberless advertizements, and rewards, offered by her father the Count, to any person who would discover her, must be fresh to your memory."

Elinor began to revive; every one present seemed to pity her, and all acknowledged they had heard of her loss, and the large rewards Alphonso had spoken of.

Proper instruments were then brought in, and Elinor was soon released from the burden of her chains: every one looked on her with surprize, and were assidious to give her every assistance her miserable situation required.

Alphonso then requested she would retire to rest a few hours, as she stood in great need of such refreshment, and ordered a carriage to be ready at a very early hour. Alphonso saw her safe to her chamber, and then returned, resolved to sit up the remainder of the night, lest any accident should discover the road they had taken, and if pursued, he determined to sell his life dearly, rather than fall into the hands of the monks again. His dread was most in the post-boy, and he was happy when he found the lad did not return till morning, and soon after found him retire to bed. The house was closed for the night, and the landlord rather anxious to know a little more particularly, sat talking the remainder of the night with Alphonso.

He seemed much affected with with Alphonso's narrative, and his countenance could ill conceal the grief that laboured at his heart, and during the night, he related to him a very melancholy event that happened to his daughter.

By the time the landlord had finished the recital of the dreadful fate of his daughter, they were informed the chaise was getting ready.—Breakfast was served in, and Elinor made her appearance, refreshed by a short repose, and comfortable from the assistance of water, of which she had not known the use of some

weeks. When ready to leave the inn, Alphonso requested, that in case they should be pursued, the landlord would be so kind to say, he knew not what road they had taken; a request almost unnecessary, for he seemed to feel much for Elinor, and heartily wished them safe beyond the reach of their enemies. Alphonso carefully packed up the chains in which he found Elinor, to convey them to the Count de Montmorenci.

Once more seated, and pursuing their journey, Elinor made some inquiries concerning her husband De Castelle, as during her confinement in the convent, it was impossible for her to know any thing. Alphonso informed her of all he knew prior to his seizure, but that so powerful were his accusers, it was much to be feared he would suffer thereby, for he had heard he was removed from the castle of Angers, to a prison in Loudun. Elinor replied, "I have taught my heart to expect the worst, and hope heaven will endow me with fortitude, to bear with resignation, every ill that may happen." Various conversations of De Castelle's affairs took up the time, till they arrived at the inn where they were to change horses.

Eager to reach home, Alphonso staid but while the horses were putting too: partaking of a slight repast, they again seated themselves and drove off.

They travelled very fast, and reached Uzerches late that night, where they slept.—Elinor enjoyed a comfortable repose; the fatigues of the day threw her into a profound

sleep, which lasted till the servant went to inform her, the gentleman was just going to breakfast.

Elinor did not keep him long waiting, and he was pleased to see her look refreshed by her nights rest. They then recommenced their journey, and continued till about four o'clock in the afternoon, when Alphonso found they were about two miles distant from their own habitation, and they quitted the carriage, from whence he thought it most prudent to walk, as he wished every trace of them might be lost there.

Directing his course across the forest, that they might avoid the road, as the habit and appearance of both were sufficient to create astonishment in the breast of every observer. Elinor being a little recovered by air and proper refreshments, and a brilliant ray of hope darting into her soul, made her exert herself to step forward with a cheerfulness he could scarce expect from the languid and relaxed state she was in: and Alpnonso's heart, as he drew nearer his dwelling, beat with eager emotion, in the expectation that Adeline was there, or that Madame de Belmont had received intelligence from her. For the first time he mentioned her, and her unfortunate situation, and alarming disappearance to Elinor, who kindly anticipated in his anxiety for her sake. While conversing, a vista of the forest breaking on their sight, Alphonso's villa appeared. Joyful was the prospect, and they put forth a prayer, that no accident might interfere to hinder their safe arrival.

Madame de Belmont perceiving their approach, darted forth to meet tham, supposing it to be her loved Adeline, and seemed hurt at the disappointment; while Alphonso eagerly enquired for her, but to his unspeakable grief he learned Adeline had not been heard of.

He entered his house, but his heart sickened, for there was no Adeline to receive him. Madame de Belmont was much hurt at his appearance. He retired to change his dress, and requested she would favor Elinor de Montmorenci, (of whose mysterious loss she had heard Alphonso speak, prior to Adeline's being torn from them) with a change of apparel. Madame de Belmont's anxiety was much increased to know what had happened to him, but he did not keep her long in suspence.

Alphonso soon returned to her, his mind being filled with apprehensions for his safety, and judged, that as the monks knew his name, it was also very likely they would seek his abode, when they came to miss him, and therefore trace him to St. Amans. This idea made him think it unsafe to continue at his own dwelling. He hastily ran over his conjectures to Madame de Belmont, and convinced of the necessity of his removal, thought that the cave in the forest would allow him a safe retreat, till the malice of his enemies was subsided.

The hurry he had been in, and his exertions to attain liberty for himself and Elinor, made him forget the papers found in his prison. But now he had leisure to think, and could not conceive what he had ever done to the Count St. Julian to make him his enemy.---

Madame de Belmont was astonished at the name; but as he had no time to lose, he begged she would attend him and Elinor to the cave, where he would give her an exact account of his sufferings, as he designed to conceal Elinor there, till the Count de Montmorenci should be apprised of his daughter's safety. Elinor appeared, and looked quite an altered being to what she was. They all repaired to the recess; Madame de Belmont could not refrain from shedding tears, as she entered, remembering Adeline; and Alphonso felt the most poignant anguish, when he recollected the many happy hours he had passed with her there.

Having seated themselves, Alphonso gave a full account of his seizure, and all that had happened to him, since he departed from his own house in search of Adeline; of his miraculous discovery of Elinor, and their happy escape. Madame de Belmont was astonished. With lifted hands, she blessed the Almighty, for his safety and return, and rejoiced to think, the recess was still ready to afford him a shelter, as she judged it dangerous for him to remain in his own house. Elinor's surprise was equal to Madame de Belmont's; for the hurry they had been in, and the dread of pursuit, had taken from them all thoughts of talking of what they had suffered. They were now anxious to hear how Elinor came to be detained, who immediately informed them.

"I was," said she, "walking one evening, with some ladies, when a woman met me, and begged to speak with me. I stepped aside, and she requested I would not be a-

larmed, but that my father desired I would come to him immediately, as he was taken very ill, at a house about a mile from Paris; and that he had sent the gentleman's coach, where he was, to fetch me, that I might be there the sooner. Alarmed to the greatest degree, for my father's safety, who I knew was troubled with fits, I scrupled not to follow, and entered the carriage with the woman. A man was sitting there, who spoke not a syllable, but sat sullen. I began to be surprised, but not knowing but that the carriage might have been sent for some one else, I endeavoured to suppress my fears, which began to dissipate, as we stopped at a house about the distance the woman had informed me. The coach door was opened, and she stepped out; I was preparing to follow, when the man took hold of my robe, and said, "Stop, madam."

"For what, sir?" "The count is not apprised of your arrival, your sudden entrance may encrease his disorder."

While he was speaking, three men rushed out of the house, and jumped into the carriage, making me sit down. "I am going to my father, Gentlemen," said I, "I beg you, let me pass."

"Your father is at Paris," replied one of them, in a terrifying tone of voice; "And you are our prisoner." "Prisoner!" I exclaimed, "I know of no offence that any one can dare to accuse me of----I insist on getting out of the coach." "Sit still," (replied the wretch,) "or you will be forced, and if you

dare breathe an accent of alarm, your life shall answer it."

Terrified at a sound so full of horror, I was silent, but at times, implored their mercy; but neither tears, prayers, or threats, were of any avail. We drove on rapidly for many hours, when we stopped to take refreshment. We had not stopped long before another carriage came up, and we moved into it. I cast my eyes around, as they lifted me from it, but saw no means of escape; and day was just breaking. We then continued on our journey till sun set, when another change awaited us, on a common, remote from any habitation. We pursued our journey, and at length stopped at the portal of a convent, soon after the mattin bell had rung, which we heard at a distance; and the impression the external of that place made on my mind, can never be erased.

I was shewn into a large room, there to wait till mattins had finished. I was then conducted into the presence of the Superior, who was sitting to receive me. Her manner was haughty in the extreme; and she said, sneeringly, "So Elinor de Montmorenci is arrived at last----You have given a deal of trouble." "I never knew that my presence here was necessary, (I replied) nor can I think it is now."

"Your thoughts are very free, but you have no right to exercise them," said she, rising from her chair with an air of dignity, and walked away, followed by a retinue of nuns, leaving me to the care of four elderly

nuns, who soon led me to the cell designed for me.

I had no reason to complain of their rigour, for a few days; but abhorred the idea of living in a convent. The first time the Abbess deigned to take notice of me, was about four days after, as we returned from chapel, when she said, "I shall ask our Director's opinion, for I do not think it proper, that one who deals with sorcerers, should be permitted to prophane our altar."

I could hot imagine this discourse was directed to me; however, in the end, it proved so, for she commanded me into her presence, but as I approached, she said, "Satan, keep thy distance----it is not in my power to call thee by a name vile enough, thou, who associate with magicians, and those that are a disgrace to our religion."

Astonished that she should speak to me in so strange a manner, I replied, "I know no one guilty of the crimes you mention, the integrity and innocence of my own heart, can bear testimony to a conduct irreproachable." "You have listened to stories of love from one of the church, which is prohibited, you know." "Me!" I exclaimed. "You have been known to pity what you call his misfortunes, and hoped he might obtain pardon; doth not your conscience accuse you of crimes like these.?"

I was silent, for I instantly thought she alluded to De Castelle; but thought it an impossibility for any one to have the smallest idea of my having any knowledge of him. Again she spoke, and demanded a reply. I

answered, "The strange crimes you are pleased to accuse me of, really astonishes me, and I cannot believe you have any right to put such questions to me. I know of no creature who is a sorcerer, or deals with dæmons. I revere our sacred religion, and think you have been misinformed."

"The audacious wretch, (exclaimed the Abbess) how hardened in wickedness! but do not expect, by answering thus evasively, that your crimes will go unpunished." As she finished speaking, the Director entered, to whom she very minutely related the arrogance of my behaviour. He put many interrogations to me—sometimes declaring my answers were evasive, and sometimes inclined to believe me; but not finding me confess my criminality, he ordered me to close confinement, till I chose to make a clear and candid confession.

For several succeeding days, I was brought into their presence, to undergo examination, and reply to charges, which my feelings were shocked to listen to; all which tended to convince me, that it was their intention to extort from me, various charges against De Castelle, and to force me to be an instrument of accusation, and a powerful witness against that unfortunate man, whenever occasion offered, to exercise their malice.

Good God! what were my feelings at that cruel period? beset with enemies, innocence itself, could not support the shock, of being thus accused. I acknowledged, that if the person alluded to, was De Castelle, I had said, I was sorry for him, and hoped he might obtain par-

don; nor could I charge my conscience with a crime in so wishing.

"And why was you sorry?" he sternly asked. "Because the story of his troubles was spoken of by those who either visited my father, or in whatever company I happened to visit—if you have any knowledge beyond these walls, you must know that M. De Castelle's cause is the general topic of conversation."

"And what other cause?" "I had been always taught to revere the man, whose preaching every body approved, that ever heard him; and while at church, had paid attention to the reasonable, and religious discourse he uttered there. If this should be a crime, how many hundreds are as guilty?"

"And his gallantries, no doubt, were agreeable to you?"

"I never heard any one asperse his character in this manner, or if I had, what was it to me?"

"Wretch! (he exclaimed,) instantly confess your knowledge of his having made love to several females, yourself among the number; or the most unheard of tortures shall wring it from you!"

This threat, which I doubted not, but they would put in execution, struck chillingly to my heart!----I turned pale----I trembled with agony, nor had I power to articulate one syllable; but sinking with terror, leaned for support against a column, till the stern Director, (who proved to be that cruel Dampiere, the inveterate enemy of De Castelle) awakened every dorment feeling of my soul!

He judged me guilty, and condemned me to suffer innumerable hardships!

No sooner was his harsh decree promulgated, than the nuns offered me every indignity, and insult, calling me by every horrid name that malice could invent. I was led to a cell under ground, where I passed a night of intellectual torture----for my reason was almost overturned, by the cruel treatment I had undergone; and still expected to experience. When morning came, I was led from my cell, to do the most servile employments. At this I did not repine; but seeing me seem contented, they thought proper to change my pennance; and want of food was their next proceeding, in hope to extort a criminal confession against an unhappy man. I bore this with resignation, till nature, nearly exhausted, hoped for the friendly hand of death, to end my miseries!----as life, deprived of liberty, and devoted to these wretces, was divested of every charm.

I was taken from the jaws of death, and allowed nourishment, till I was enabled to be put to severe trials, and a punishment of blows was every two or three days inflicted. Still I persisted in silence, nor could all their efforts extort a word from me, that could criminate De Castelle. Not succeeding this way, I was loaded with chains, and condemned to a cell in one of the vaults, where it would only admit me in a sitting posture, for they deemed such a wretch as me unworthy the pleasure of reposing my limbs! I was consigned to this tomb of wretchedness, and literally buried alive!—Condemned to linger out a life of misery, sur-

rounded by groans and sighs, which broke from the bosoms of those unfortunate mortals, who, like me, were doomed to linger out a life of despair and wretchedness. And so cautious were our merciless persecutors, lest any one should have the comfort of speaking to a fellow sufferer, that the cells were placed at such a distance, as only their groans and melancholy moanings could be heard.

My provision of coarse bread and water, was brought regularly every week. A small lamp, which shewed the horror of the place, more dismally, and a crucifix, was all my allowance! Three weeks of anguish rolled away in this solitary manner, and my thoughts during that time, I cannot describe. I grieved till my tears were exhausted, and I could weep no more! At the beginning of my confinement my sorrows flowed for my father, whom I knew must suffer severely for my loss. Then I lamented the fate of the wretched De Castelle, whose ruin seemed inevitable. My own situation grew every day more distressing, as I had before mentioned to you, and I anticipated that day with horror, that would bring an addition to the family of Montmorenci, under circumstances so very dreadful.

After I had been confined in the vaults about three weeks, I was rather surprized to see the Abbess approach, attended by four nuns bearing torches, and with pleasure I listened to the sound of a human voice; for though I had spoken to the nuns that brought my scanty allowance, I never received a reply. The Abbess loosened my chain from the ring that secured it, and I was led tottering through the

vaults, my limbs being enfeebled by long disuse, and bending with the weight of chains that emanicled my hands and body.

Thus I was conducted into the hall, but for what I neither knew nor cared; as I was almost regardless of any thing that might befall me. The Abbess proceeded first,—I was led by two nuns, and the other two followed: but as I entered the door, the astonishment I felt at seeing Cardinal Richelieu seated in the grand chair, raised a few steps from the pavement, was extreme. Dampiere! the cruel Dampiere! was standing on his right hand, and a friar who was called father Lactance, on the left; a number of nuns stood near looking with awe. He seemed in expectation of me; for as I entered, his eyes were fixed, in a haughty and imperious manner as I approached; but the sudden sight struck me, so as I am unable to describe; an involuntary start made me incapable of proceeding.

The Abbess pointed to me, and the Cardinal commanded me to advance. Hope fondly flattered me that I should find a friend in the Cardinal, to espouse my cause; for formerly, my father had done a signal service for his eminence, who had passed it by neglected; but now I sincerely wished my appearance in such distressing circumstances, might call those recollections, and that he would now enjoy the supreme happiness of returning the obligation, by restoring the daughter to the arms of her unhappy parent. How erroneous were all my expectations. I stepped forward with an effort beyond my strength, buoyed up by the flattering hope;—and throwing myself at his feet,

with lifted hands and streaming eyes, implored him to pity and release me, from the cruel tyranny that had been exercised over me for several weeks. The Cardinal smiled, and said, "You speak of tyranny! I know the whole of your story,—your guilt, every action of your life is known to me. I must acknowledge, my opinion is, that you have been treated with too much lenity, for the crime you have been capable of committing."

"I know of no crimes," said I; that can possibly deserve the unmerited punishments I have received." "And who gave you a right to judge of them?"

"The consciousness of my own heart, that has ever acted with innocence and truth. My most inveterate enemies must acknowledge it, if they would speak the truth." And I rose from the feet of the insulting Cardinal.—"Your accomplice," he replied; "has confessed your guilt---tortures have forced it from his bosom, and you are now doubly accused." "Heaven knows I have no accomplice!---the very name fills me with amazement!"

The Cardinal then named De Castellle :--- My heart was chilled with horror! He said, "Tortures had wrung the accusation from him." I knew not what the villainy of his oppressers might have made him avow, but I could not believe his noble heart would ever breathe a sigh, however extorted, that should lead me to suffer a moment's pain.

"He has declared, (said his eminence) your seducing arts, that you first drew him from his duty in the church of St. Croix, by your fatal wiles! That for your sake he wrote,

as is believed, his infamous book against the celibacy of the clergy. Through your insinuations and assistance, he tried infernal powers, and made devils subservient to his will: look round on those hapless victims, and see the effects of his diabolical magic."

As he spoke this, the nuns began to throw themselves into horrible fits! Their shrieks rent the hall with shocking sounds! I was rather alarmed, but recollecting all the past proceedings against De Castelle, wherein he had been accused of possessing these nuns with evil spirits, I imagined them only playing off some of their former artifices. The bigot father Lactance, smiled with a pleasure his arts were not sufficient master to conceal.

My mind soon regained its serenity; this abominable conspiracy increased my indignation, and I cast on the whole group, a contemptous smile, unmoved by the arts of those wretches! Dampiere pointing to me, said, "Your eminence sees how hardened in wickedness this unfeeling wretch is. Will you please to condemn her, for hitherto no confession has been drawn, that can aid our cause against that wretch De Castelle. Elinor de Montmorenci, what have you to say?"

"But little. Every thing his eminence has said, he has been misinformed in. I never knew any of the crimes he is pleased to say De Castelle accuses me with. For his exercising magic, I do not believe that he, or any one else has the power; the Almighty would not permit it, much less am I guilty of assisting him. It is the infernal powers of his vile accusers, that base conspiracy, whose secret

schemes have formed this absurd contrivance, to blacken his blameless character; protesting he knows the art of magic, thereby to delude a simple people, by which means, you would gloss over the villainy that lurks in your hearts. But there is a god above, a just and awful god, before whose tribunal ye must all one day appear, and if you take the lives of your devoted victims, and treat us with unrelenting cruelty here on earth, I cannot believe it in your power, to deny us peace in the world to come;--- we may be happy when misery pursues you. And is it possible to imagine, women, who have devoted themselves to heaven, could be capable of such enormities! Wretched beings that you are! The minions of De Castelle's accusers (for I can call them by no other name) you will soon feel the vengeance of a righteous god, who knows the hearts, the vile hearts, that inhabit breasts of adamant. There is an eye that marks ye! My lord, the Cardinal, I did hope, his good sense could not yield to the absurdities, which are perceptible to the most common capacity, not wilfully blind and hardened, to every feeling of humanity; and more sorry am I to remind him, of the past services, my father had done his eminence, which it pleases him to forget; the recollection of which, led me to hope, I should find a friend, who would rejoice it lay in his power to return the obligation, and free me from my cruel chains, and the unwarrantable power that holds me. I am deceived, and bow resigned, waiting your pleasure."

I really was astonished to find they would suffer me to talk so long, without interrupting

me; but it seemed as if they were all confounded. A few moments of painful suspense succeeded. The Cardinal than rose to pronounce my doom, which was, "That he perceived, the doom of death would give me pleasure, in his opinion, I had invited it; but my expectations should be defeated, therefore he declared, I should linger out a life of misery, be condemned to my cell, strongly secured, with only the most scanty allowance of common provision, to sustain a wretched existance, never more to see the light of heaven."

"Even in those caverns of wretchedness to which your eminence consigns me, my sufferings will not debar me the mercies of heaven; and though prohibited ever more to gaze on that glorious orb of day, of which, by your cruel decree, I am now about to take a last farewel, I shall derive a consolation, in a retrospect of my own life and conduct, which the shaft of calumny has never dared to prophane. And Oh! Almighty Power! endow me to suffer with patience, and save me from desponding," was my reply.

The Abbess now ordered the nuns to return with me. The irrevocable doom was fixed;—the dreadful assembly broke up, and I was led back to my cell of horrors, strongly guarded.

My lamp and coarse provisions were served as before. I strove to reconcile myself to my fate, and prayed incessantly for death to free me, before that fatal period arrived that would increase my affliction, and drive me to madness. As I now saw the impossibility of being released, but by the hand of death, whose aid I courted in vain. But my nights and some of

my days were more distressing; for in addition to the sound of female cries, I could at times hear heart-breaking groans, that seemed to proceed from men.

I could not conceive how this could be possible, as I knew of no men being in our convent, but the Director. To ask either of the nuns who brought my victuals, I knew would be useless, as they never spoke.

At length one of the nuns who used to come to me, looked melancholy and ill. One day I was surprized that she came alone, and more so, when she spoke to me. She with tears confessed the severest remorse of conscience for the part she had taken against me and De Castelle; told me that several of the nuns had altered their opinion, and atoned for their faults, by putting a period to their existance. "Such must also be my fate," said sister Clara, "for were it known that I repented, I should be condemned, like you, to linger out a wretched existance; and is not death a blessing to that?" I endeavoured to persuade her from it, and strove to convince her of the enormity of self murder! but the poor wretch was so seized with remorse and despair, she would not hear me;---begged my forgiveness, and darted from me: I saw her no more. Towards evening, the Abbess surprized at her stay, entered the vault with her attendants, and found her hanging there.--- They gave a shriek! but their horror was increased by finding a paper on her breast, declaring her abhorrence at having taken a part with them, in accusing De Castelle.

Whatever became of the body of the unhap-

py Clara, I never heard, for they soon after left the vault, and many tedious hapless days have I since passed there. I resigned myself up to my cruel destiny, and despair, in spite of all my endeavours, had nearly seized me, when to my astonishment, Alphonso appeared. I assure you, I doubted my senses, and believed it the error of imagination, and when he spoke, I scarcely dared to hope it was him, for how was it possible he could gain admittance into the vaults.

My grief renewed, when he said, "He was also a prisoner;" but he endeavoured to cheer me with a ray of hope, by declaring "He would seek the means of escape;" and I think the time never seemed so long, or I felt so anxious, during my confinement, as from the time he left me, till his return.

The pleasure I felt, when I heard him say, "He had obtained the means of escape," I cannot express, it seemed to seize on every faculty, my tongue almost denied its office, and my feet, from long disuse, refused me support. To Alphonso's generous care, I am indebted for liberty and life, and the life of one, who will be dear to me as my own. He kindly conveyed me through that abode of horrors, when at the time freedom presented itself, my strength refused the means of obtaining it; and never, Alphonso, never, while life inhabits the being of Elinor, will she forget the obligation."

Here Elinor finished her narrative. Madame de Belmont and Alphonso thanked her for the sad recital, and joined in returning sincere thanks to the Giver of all good, for mercies bestowed on them; and their timely release from

sufferings almost unheard of. Elinor was anxious to let her father know of her safety; and Alphonso not knowing how, lest if they wrote, and any accident should happen to the letter. He determined to write a short billet, and send it by his servant Eustace, whom the Count de Montmorenci well knew. The note was, "Fear not to follow the bearer to where he will conduct you----you will then see and embrace your daughter in safety."

To conclude, Elinor had soon the pleasure of a visit from her father, to whom she related the whole of her unhappy story and confinement. He deemed it improper for her to remain in France, and therefore determined to return to Paris, and set his affairs in order, leaving Elinor to the care of Alphonso. After the Count had settled every thing to his wish, he returned to the Forest, and thanking Alphonso for his friendly care of Elinor, departed for England. The unfortunate De Castelle, husband to Elinor, in a few months suffered the most cruel death. Alphonso soon heard tidings of his beloved Adeline, and though he had numerous troubles to undergo, before he could relieve her from the difficulties she was oppressed with, yet was happy at last, and lived to see the downfall of the Count St. Julian, the murderer of her mother and brother, and, but for the interference of providence, would have murdered her father and herself.

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